

THE POINT

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Stupid is as stupid does

[Note: Letters to The Point are occasionally edited for length or potential libel, but not for grammar or usage]

Att. James Saposa

Dear Editor,

As a reader of the school newspaper I have finally had my absolute limit of your editorial tirades. Take a look around at the people you are trying to persuade to read the paper. Notice anything? Perhaps their Gap and American Eagle clothing escaped your attention but surely the constant use of the word "dude" didn't fall on deaf ears! They are the people who work in the mall and make movies like the Grinch smash hits. They are the people who probably screwed up your order at J.C. Penny's. Every issue you compose a snide little snippet, which showcases your intellectual superiority to those of us who are unfortunate enough to find Adam Sandler funny and are frankly more than a little bored by the Red Balloon. It's time you faced it; we stupid people are everywhere. And guess what, every time you cut someone off in traffic, write a check to pay for your groceries, or dress entirely in black when you aren't attending a funeral someone has pegged you among us. So maybe in your next article you may want to consider the irony of how you paid seven bucks to watch a movie just so you could tear it down or perhaps you'd care to consider that the girl behind the counter's vapid look may really be the result of pensive consideration on how you could be so stupid as to not comprehend she doesn't own the store. Not likely, it's much more fun to feel important and smart unfortunately such behavior is a trademark of people who aren't.

P.S. I'm sure that my article is just teeming with delicious grammatical mistakes for you to delight in but remember that no one is perfect and Einstein loved the three stooges.

H [or possibly M] Lajoie

[I don't know exactly when this letter was written, there is no date on it. (Although it looks like a two-year-old had a go at it with a ballpoint pen.) So I am not sure exactly which editorial tirade sent M (or possibly H) Lajoie over the edge.

My knee-jerk reaction was to take the letter and tear it apart to hyperbolic extremes, but such sarcasm doesn't really translate into print all that well. (Besides, I apparently have a contingent of stupid people I need to talk down to.) Additionally, I do not actually take delight in pointing out glaring grammatical and typographical mistakes. I simply feel if one is submitting something to a professional journal (or even The Point) for potential publication, it shouldn't be too much to expect the author to spell-check the fucking thing. (Even if the only word you get right is the last name of the person the letter is addressed to.)

But all this aside, am I missing something or was this a letter in defense of stupidity? I agree with the concept that idiots are everywhere, but does that mean we should suffer them? If a majority of the people on the planet suddenly developed a disease where they could not function in normal society, there would be an enormous hue and cry. Organizations would be formed to find the cause of the disease and cure it (unless of course the disease was drug addiction, then the solution would be somewhat more...final)

Well folks, we have such a disease and it is called stupidity. Now there are several different types of stupidity. There are those who are stupid to the marrow; folks who may have heard of fancy book larnin' but ain't havin' none of it. They are the reason things like the Darwin Awards exist (www.darwinawards.com). There are folks who are merely unthinking or lacking in common sense, and it's for these people that there are warning labels on coffee cups now.

Then there are people like H (or possibly M) Lajoie who with just a little bit of effort, could actually be unstupid (or as we "superior" types like to say, smart.) She (I am assigning gender based solely on handwriting. If the letter writer is in fact Mr. Lajoie, next time include a signature. Or even a first name.) uses words like pensive and snide correctly and references The Red Balloon. However, she seems to lack a sense of sarcasm and is apparently ignorant to the fact that film reviewers don't pay to see movies.

This nitpicking aside, self-confessed stupid person, M (or possibly H) Lajoie attempts to deny her claim by establishing a somewhat coherent and convincing argument/personal attack. Allow me to rebut a few points.

1) It is precisely because the campus is filled with look-a-like, dress-a-like clones that this paper has the particular slant that it does. If everyone held current popular "culture" in the contempt that it richly deserves, then I would be preaching to the converted wouldn't I? (Of course this would leave us with a campus full of cynical, bitter curmudgeons showcasing their intellectual superiority; and that is as grisly an image as one can conceive.)

However, if what they read in this paper can make even a single person think twice before doing the accepted thing, before conforming to standards that they may not even be aware they are conforming to, before unques

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THE POINT

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The Point considers for publication letters to the editor on any topic of interest to the Fitchburg State College community. All submissions run at the discretion of the Editor-in-Chief and are subject to editing for style and length.

All articles must be typed or legibly handwritten and include a name and phone number in case of questions. All letters in response to an article must be submitted within two days after the article is published.

Announcements should be short, including dates, places, times and a contact person.

The content of any article labeled Opinion does not necessarily represent the views of The Point, its staff, or Fitchburg State College.

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THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW

IN A SECRET D.N.C. LABORATORY, DR. WILBUR VON PHILBERT WORKS ON HIS LATEST CREATION--
--AN ARMY OF WHINY LIBERAL PUNDITBOTS! THE GOREBOT MAY BE DEFEATED, BUT I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE ON THE MAN RESPONSIBLE--

--RALPH NADER! SIR, THIS IS MADNESS!



NO ONE DENIES THAT NADER WAS A FACTOR--BUT IN AN ELECTION THIS CONVOLUTED, IT'S LUNACY TO FOCUS ON HIM SO OBSESSIVELY! THERE ARE JUST TOO MANY VARIABLES--STARTING WITH THE GOREBOT'S OWN INHERENT SHORTCOMINGS--

MY GOD, JENKINS--YOU'RE A SECRET NADERITE, AREN'T YOU?!



PUNDITBOTS--
ATTACK!!



SIR, MAKE THEM STOP! THEIR INCESSANT WHINING WILL DRIVE ME MAD!

NOTHING CAN STOP THE WHINY LIBERAL PUNDITBOTS, YOU TRAITOROUS FOOL! THEY WILL HAUNT YOU LIKE THE FURIES--FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS!

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BWAN HA HA HA!



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THE NEW MILLENNIUM

I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE CONSUMER CONFIDENCE INDEX...



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Stupid thinking

Continued from page 2

tioningly accepting the latest manufactured trend in food, fashion or what have you, as though the order to obey had been written in flaming letters on the temple wall by the moving finger of the corporate media, then I will have done my job and done it well.

2) I too was bored by *The Red Balloon*. Just because a movie is hyped as an art film or is proclaimed a masterpiece by the types of yuppie scum who think of *"Sex in the City"* as a lifestyle guidebook does not make it so. I do not consider myself one of those painful anti-populist "artiste" snobs who feels that everything is beneath them. Just because someone dresses all in black does not mean they are intellectually superior (a simple trip to *Man-Ray* on a Friday night will prove that).

My problem with Adam Sandler, Chris Farley and the whole SNL crowd et al, is that they are consistently lowering the bar, dropping the standards against which a movie should be considered. Take *American Beauty*.

Now this was a pretty fine movie. However, it was not the instant classic everyone wanted desperately to believe it was. In a perfect world, *American Beauty* would be the typical Hollywood fare instead of the pre-chewed, pre-viewed pabulum we are consistently served.

People complain about the vast amount of crap on TV. However, when *"American Playhouse"* first aired the excellent Dustin Hoffman version of *Death of a Salesman*, do you know what it lost to in the ratings? A rerun of a *"Lady Blue"* episode. A **RERUN**. (And for those of you who may not remember *"Lady Blue"* was an incredibly bad cop show.) One should ask (as us smart folk do) why. The answer is simple: because TV is watched by vast amounts of stupid people in a never-ending cycle of cause and effect. The dumber you get watching it, the dumber the shows get to "keep up."

This gives rise to the era of lowered expectations we find ourselves living through. Television concentrates on the negative because, lets face it, it sells. If you can watch the latest about a house fire/gang rape/transvestite nun/twelve idiots stuck on an island somewhere, you will stay tuned and therefore generate ratings which in turn raises the amount the station/network can charge advertisers to sell you more crap you don't need.

The downside is, all this sex and death spectacle has given rise to the concept of one must be doing good as long as one isn't doing bad. "I take care of my kids, not like that mother on 'Ricki Lake'." "I haven't been arrested, like on that 'COPS' show." Correct me if I'm wrong, but aren't you supposed to take care of your kids? Aren't you supposed to avoid jail? When did it become a reward to not be punished?

3) The point I was making in my article on people in the service industry was not to proclaim them uniformly stupid, but decrying general stupidity overall; if you missed that point, you must be pretty...oh, never mind.

4) I do not consider myself intellectually superior because I recognize Adam Sandler for the simple-minded one joke phenom he is (or at least was before Little Nicky). I consider myself intellectually superior because I can communicate with others of my species by using language precisely so as to convey my exact meaning and not sound...well, stupid.

So maybe in your next letter, you might want to consider the origins of your stupidity. Do you think it might be because you are being educated in a country where teachers make less than a busboy in a five-star restaurant?

Or do you think it might be because it's easier to be stupid. Just settle back into the Barcalounger with a stuffed crust pizza and a sixer of Bud. Click on MTV to catch the news, then see who's getting voted off the island. And wait for the next Adam Sandler movie.]

James Sposato
Editor-in-Chief

It's the education system stupid...

by Justin Crawford

True story: in one of my English classes, the professor asked us to separate into groups to evaluate each other's writing. We traded papers and about five minutes later, everyone else in the group had finished reading, while I was still furiously editing the paper I had received.

Eventually I gave up. I had just moved onto page two (of five) and the paper was so awful I couldn't stand to correct it any further. Most of my frustration was centered on the fact that the writing was so incredibly garbled and incoherent that I didn't even know where to begin telling the girl next to me how to start improving the paper. So I put my pen down and listened to the comments of the other group members.

"I like it," said one girl. "You use the word 'great' too much," one guy mentioned. Then it was my turn to offer suggestions.

"Well," I said, "first of all you have a lot of sentence fragments, which are actually pretty easy to fix." The girl then informed me that she had no idea what a sentence fragment was.

Dumbfounded, I attempted to explain to her the essentials of piecing together a grammatically correct sentence. "Did you learn anything about this in high school?" I finally inquired.

"No," she said. "We didn't write in high school. We read books."

I was incredulous. I tried to explain the other comments I had written to her, but I think she was mesmerized by the smacking of her own bubble gum. So I abbreviated everything I had to say. I still have that paper today – the paper of a senior English major, who would be out looking for a job just three months later.

Writing is indeed suffering. Walk around this campus and you can't help but notice all the signs and advertisements littered with misspellings, blatant grammatical errors, and abuses of proper writing techniques. They are everywhere.

Why does the ability to write well seem to be going the way of the dinosaur? Writing certainly isn't the favorite activity of a great number of people. However, being able to write well doesn't mean being able to publish a novel, or even write for a newspaper. It means having the basic structural and grammatical writing skills to succeed in a number of different potential job areas.

It means, for the most part, being well spoken; this means being able to talk without sounding like a kindergartner; without using "like" every fourth word, or without dropping the f bomb whenever you can't think of a better adjective. It means being able to walk into a job interview and present yourself as an intelligent human being; it means being able to express yourself on paper with clarity and precision, no matter what you may be writing.

What we are finding today is that more and more people see no need to be proficient writers, that is, they see no need why they should have to learn to write. They also see no need to develop the critical thinking skills that are necessary in today's job market – unique skills that writing offers.

The math major might see no need for it, as he will spend the rest of his life crunching numbers and working out problems. Same goes for the business major. The guy who is interested in science might think that he'll be working in hands-on situations for the duration of his career, so he doesn't bother to learn to write well. After all, writing is for those who want to write, who love to do it...right?

The history majors are the ones who really get me. Having just completed my history minor, I have sat in many a history class and heard the professor point out that students' papers will be graded for grammar and structure as well as content, only to hear a collective groan emanate from

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Two wrongs don't make a write

Continued from page 4

the class. "We should be graded on what we say, not how we say it," is most people's usual argument. What the hell are these people talking about?

Are they saying, "As long as I include the right factual information in my paper, I can afford to sound like an idiot?" The amazing part is that some of these people actually want to be *historians* – a group of the most well-written, precise, and poignant people in the entire world.

This constant whining is certainly not limited to the ranks of the history people. In fact, my experience has been that a good majority of students are so put off by the thought that they will have to write something, that they end up writing a paper just to get it done rather than trying to learn anything from the experience of writing it.

Hey, it's college. We all procrastinate once in a while (or more often) and end up having to whip something out at the last minute. To do so to avoid the act of writing itself, is to miss out on a vital aspect of your education. The fact of the matter is that when you get out into the real world, you will need to know how to write. Period.

For the business major it might mean writing up reports and proposals. For the science major it might mean putting together detailed and accurate lab reports. For the mathematician it might mean describing an in-depth engineering project.

The root of this problem seems to lie in our educational system itself, as evidenced by the girl in the opening paragraphs here. Why does there appear to be such an aversion to writing, beginning in our elementary and secondary schools? My own experiences have helped me form a few theories as to why this might be:

The belief that writing is a separate discipline, standing independent of others, and only reserved for English classes. There is nothing wrong with encouraging students to explore their career options. However, this is often done at the expense of English and writing. For example, a student who is strong in science is encouraged by his teachers in his science work, while meanwhile, his writing skills are neglected, and suffer as a result.

In elementary history classes, students are bombarded with factual tidbits and figures that they are then made to memorize, rather than having the opportunity to express themselves through writing in a hands-on manner.

In my opinion, from kindergarten up through college, writing activities should be incorporated into every single class in some way, shape or form. The idea that a math class should be based around writing is absurd, but even here there are word problems. In English classes, writing should be the focus of the class, along with readings of whatever area of writing is being emphasized (fiction, journalism, etc.).

Writing isn't "fun." For many, writing is a painstaking task to be avoided at all costs. The sad part is that many educators indirectly encourage this behavior. The idea that school needs to be fun at all times, and that students should not be subjected to things that they don't like to do is ludicrous.

Although a good teacher will seek out various ways in which students learn, the fun way will not always be the best way. Regardless of whether or not writing is a favorite activity, it needs to be taught because in the end, students need it. College can be pretty stressful too at times, but as students, we stick with it because we know it will benefit us in the long run.

Teachers cannot offer enough individual attention to students. Writing is an intensely personal and intimate activity. In a class of twenty students, a paper assignment will turn out twenty different pieces. A general class lecture on writing skills may help all twenty of those students in some rare cases, but the only real way to help people improve their writing is to sit down with each student and go over thier work.

When students are *shown* what to do rather than just *told* what to do, they can see for themselves how to improve, and can take those techniques and incorporate them into their own unique writing styles. Learning how to improve one's own individual writing style calls for individual attention. This is why a class lecture is insufficient – because a lecture cannot possibly address each unique, individual problem in each person's writing.

Writing is being shunned in favor of the so-called "practical disciplines." In mainstream society's quest to turn out money grubbing, unfeeling robots with computer chips embedded in our souls, the emphasis has shifted away from writing (and the rest of the liberal arts) to business and tech-oriented professions. Watch any TV for an hour, and you'll be peppered with numerous ads for mutual fund companies, internet service providers, cellphone services, online stock trading services, etc.

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RED MEAT

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from the secret files of
Max Cannon

Well, I finally went down to the city transportation office and took the test to become a metro bus driver.



I did okay on the drivin' part, but I couldn't answer any of the written stuff where they ask you about traffic laws. I probably should have studied that little booklet they gave me.



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nocturnal transmissions:

In search of my inner lesbian

by Tess Rhonda Luhrcott

First off, let me apologize. If you read my last article, I wrote about the character Willow on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. I wrote how she has been "dyking out" since last year. Well, perhaps I should have used different terminology. My gay friend Sean said because I'm not a lesbian I can't use certain words, especially in print.

For instance, he can call his ex-boyfriend a dirty faggot, but I must use the usual and customary swears. He can refer to what his cousin Veronica did on spring break as "dyking out", while I must refer to it as being "sexually adventurous" or

"living the straight male fantasy." He said I **can** use the word "queer", but only in the realm of "he is so queer," as in "stupid", and only because I'm a gay sympathizer.

I suppose I understand. I certainly have nothing against homosexuality. I mean, I bought Sean his first dildo, for God's sake. I enjoy being a sympathizer, though. I mean, I can go shopping with Sean, and he will tell me if I look hippy in a certain pair of jeans, or which tops make my boobs look bigger. I love Sean, but it's as if he's part of a really cool band, and I can't join because I don't play an instrument. He can get me backstage passes, which is cool, but not the same

thing. I decided to bounce my article off my Aunt Sheila, who is still decidedly single, to see what she had to say.

She told me that she knew my heart was in the right place, but that I should be careful of whom I might offend. She said wait ten years and watch people start referring to my single female roommate as my lover. Then to wait another ten years and see how I'd feel when my breasts start to sag and realize how easier life would be if I really was a lesbian.

Then she told me she needed a drink and that she would take me out to lunch soon. I love my aunt, but she really needs a man. She's on my

Grandmother Rhonda's fast track to happiness.

Grandma doesn't want Sheila repeating her mistakes, which means skipping the marriage for love that will inevitably end in divorce and going right for the marriage of convenience and money. Of course, Rhonda remarried when she was in her mid-fifties and still gorgeous. My Aunt Sheila, however, is in her early forties and looks like my grandfather. There's a nose issue there. So we'll have to wait and see what happens, the upside being if she never marries she can forever blame my grandmother, which will make Sheila truly happy.

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IT'S ALL IN THE MIND..

In the great fruit bowl of life, are you a pear or an apple? Does eating dessert feel like a mortal sin? Do you feel like your clothes are shrinking? Cheer up, you're in good company. After all, how do you think the Venus de Milo would look in a thong?

FSC is pleased to announce that they will be hosting Susan Poulin and Gordon Carlisle's touring theatrical production "In My Head I'm Thin" on February 22, 2001. The show uses situational comedy, original songs, slides, and life-size reproductions of classic paintings to trace one woman's sojourn of self-discovery as she comes to terms with her body image.

Audiences learn why "Venus Don't Diet" as they meet a host of characters they won't soon forget, ranging from an aerobics instructor who's "beyond fit" to a singing doll with the blues.

"In My Head I'm Thin" is part of Eating Disorders Awareness Week (Feb. 12- 16) and an ongoing effort of FSC to bring educational and entertaining programs to the community.

Susan Poulin is a Maine native whose original comedy has been seen nationally. She was voted the 1996 Contemporary Story Champion at the First Annual Yankee Yarn Contest in Keene, NH, and has twice been selected as a NH State Council of the Arts Individual Artistic Fellowship Finalist.

Susan has been a featured performer in "The Mirth Canal" and "The Mirth of Venus," parts of the Women's Performance Festival at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, The Maine Festival and the Min-

neapolis Fringe Theatre Festival. Her essays have been heard on New Hampshire Public Radio.

Gordon Carlisle has been actively involved as a visual artist, songwriter, writer and actor on the New Hampshire Seacoast for over fifteen years. A graduate of the San Francisco Art Institute, Carlisle primarily makes his living as a visual artist, creating both private and public murals (including New Hampshire's largest mural, "Lest We Forget" in Manchester), graphics and illustrations.

His artwork has been exhibited around the country. Gordon is a recent recipient of New Hampshire State Council of the Arts Individual Artist Fellowship for his achievements as a muralist.

As the "Poolyles," Susan and Gordon have been collaborating on plays, songs, and artwork for a decade, including "Spousal Deafness...and Other Bones of Contention" and "Ida: Woman Who Runs With the Moose" (the Portsmouth Herald's 1997-1998 Spotlight on the Arts Award Play of the Year).

Their critically acclaimed production, "In My Head I'm Thin," has played to sold out houses and broken box office records at the McDonough Street Studio in Portsmouth, NH, the Oak Street Theatre in Portland, ME. It also has been performed in colleges and universities throughout New England.

"In My Head I'm Thin" will be performed on February 22, 2001 at 7:00 p.m. in the M&M lounge. It is free and open to the public.



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They're here, they're queer and they're on TV

Continued from page 6

In any case, all this talk of my improprieties and my place as a gay sympathizer sent me back to Sean in search of my inner lesbian. He recommended I come over and watch the entire run of Showtime's new show, *Queer as Folk*.



Originally, it was a show in England about a bunch of gay friends and their lives. Now its been dumb-ed down and Americanized, and has been airing since last autumn. Sean taped every episode and owns a six hour block of the show and was more than happy to share it with me. Have you noticed people record stuff off TV to show other people more often than for their own sake?

Anyhow, the show was quite impressive. It revolves around five gay men and two lesbians. Brian and Michael have been best friends since puberty. Although Michael lusts after Brian, he will never have him; Brian is far too enamored with himself and is too busy bringing men back to his swanky pad.

The other guys in the circle are Emmet, the super-queen, and Ted, the average guy. The fifth guy is Justin, a 17 year-old whom 29 year-old Brian takes home and deflowers in the first episode.

Melanie and Lindsey are the lesbian couple. Lindsey has also been a friend of Brian for years, and he has fathered a child for them. Sean says Brian is the gay male fantasy. He has a glamorous job, makes lots of money, has no family near where he lives and he has sex with a variety of attractive men. He's the anti-hero because he's also a jerk, and is implicitly selfish. I, however, like Michael, even though he is a doormat. He's very cute, he cares about his friends, and he loves his Mom.

Her name is Debbie, a waitress at a gay diner. She's the sassy mother



to the whole group, the conscience for them all. She is the most real character in the show.

The show has a lot going for it: sex, snappy dialogue, drama, romance, drugs, violence. For anyone curious to see man on man action, this is the show for you. This is no *Will & Grace*. You see tongue kissing, naked butts, thrusting pelvises. Nothing is intentionally hidden short of full frontal nudity, and Sean assures me it is accurate.

Many questions came into my mind as I watched. Are there actually men out there who get as much action as Brian? Why can't Sean find a hunky chiropractor like Michael? Are gay men really this focused on sex? Are they really so

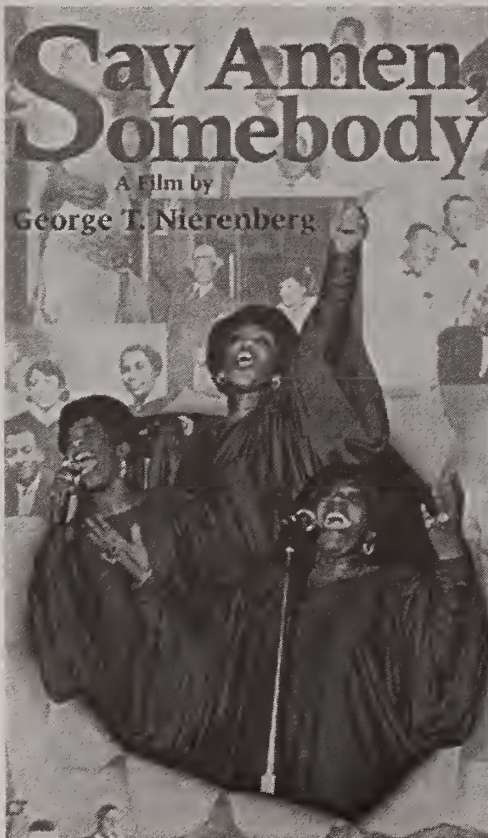
frightened of relationships? His answers were "Yes, I wish I knew, yes, and usually." In the end he told me that stereotypes don't come out of nowhere.

Then I considered the lesbian couple. They have a cute house, a loving relationship and an adorable son. There were no butch haircuts, no trucks and no Birkenstocks to be seen. This seems like a less than stereotypical depiction.

In any case, I considered my Aunt Sheila's words. Could I learn to love a woman? Would I be happier as a lesbian? Would life be easier? As I considered this, a scene came up where Melanie and Lindsey started to fool around. I had my answer.

Overall, I like men. Sure, I've kissed a girl at a party, and someday, maybe I'll go all the way, but for now I have to be me. Men haven't proven useless to me yet, so I'm not ready to abandon my hetero ways. I'll retain my status as queer ally. I'll hang with Sean and watch *Queer as Folk*. In the end, all I can do is be true to myself, right? Just check back with me in twenty years or so, and see what I have to say then...

Old Time Religion



Fitchburg State College's film series, *Indies!* A *Year of Independent Films*, continues on Thursday, Feb. 15, with a screening of the documentary *Say Amen, Somebody* at 7 p.m. in the Hammond Building's Ellis White Lecture Hall.

Director George Nierenberg's film captures the soaring beauty of gospel music and the words of two of its shining stars- "Mother" Willie Mae Ford Smith and "Professor" Thomas Dorsey. The 1982 film won the British Society of Film Critics Award for the best documentary.

Admission is \$5 for the general public and \$3 for students and seniors. For more information, call 978-665-3709 or 978-665-3347.

On-line health care at FSC

Been feeling ill? What would you do if you had the flu or felt nauseous? For the answer to these and other common problems, we at Student Health Services would like to introduce you to our new web page at www.fsc.edu.healthserv/ and click on Common Problems.

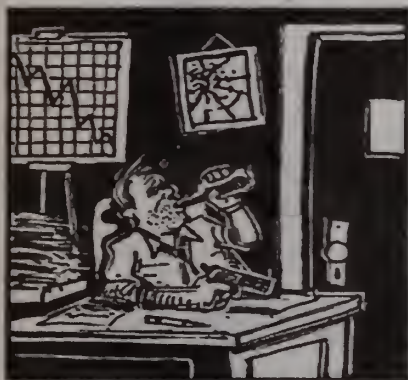
To learn what services are available, walk in times or where to go when Health Services is closed - click on Services.

Curious about what is covered by the Chickering Group Health Insurance? Visit them on line by clicking on Medical Insurance then click the link to Chickering.com view Chickering's Student Brochure online.

Click on Health Requirements to learn just what immunizations Massachusetts State Law require for entrance into the State College System.

Those of you getting ready to travel on Spring Break click on Related Links and under Miscellaneous click on Travelers Health to find out what immunizations are needed to enter countries you may be visiting. Information regarding topics on sex, nutrition and substance abuse are also available through links listed on the same page.

The goal of Student Health Care Services is to provide the best care possible to our students. It is our hope this web site provides easy access to frequently asked questions and assists the student with information 24 hours a day.



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attention all students

The Student Government Association has many open positions to fill:

Executive Board:

Secretary

Class of 2001:

Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer & four Reps

Class of 2002:

Secretary, Treasurer and four Representatives

Class of 2003:

Three Representatives

Commuters Board:

Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer and four Representatives

If you are interested in one of these positions, please call extension 300 or come to the weekly SGA Council meetings Tuesday 6:30 pm in the Hammond Alumni Rooms

come let your voice be heard

DeZarn to Play FSC

Teresa DeZarn, who has performed in such Broadway musicals as *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *The Secret Garden* and *Showboat*, will perform songs of the Valentine season at a vocal concert at Fitchburg State College on Saturday, February 17 at 7:30 p.m. in Weston Auditorium.



The show will benefit the fourth annual AmeriCulture Arts Festival. Passes from the 2000 AmeriCulture Arts Festival season and tickets from DeZarn's canceled October 15 performance will be honored at the door.

Tickets may also be purchased by calling the Weston Box Office at 978 665 - 3347, Monday through Friday 12:30-3:30 p.m., or at the door. Admission is \$7 for adults, \$5 for seniors and students and \$3 for children.

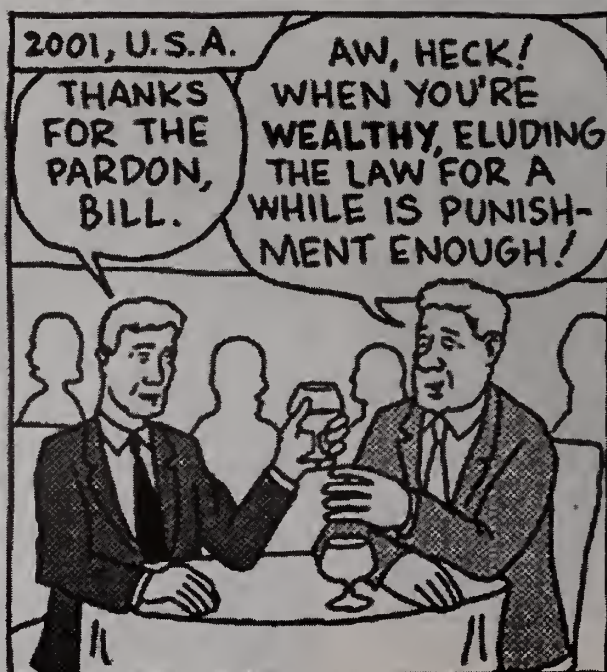
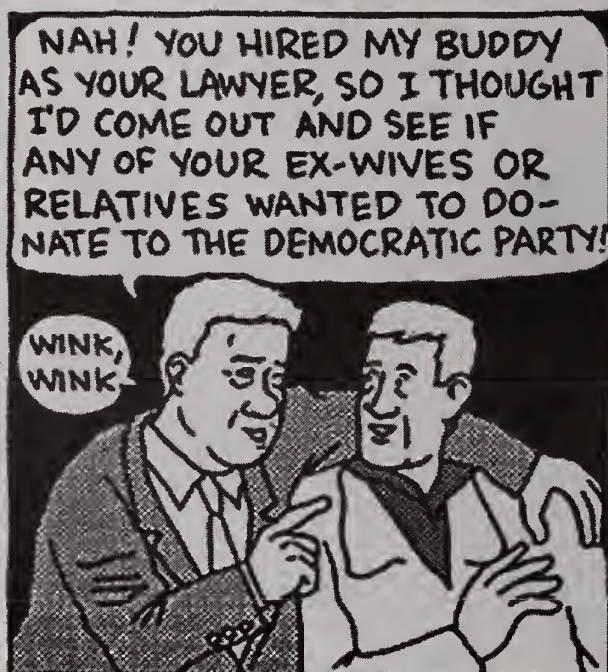
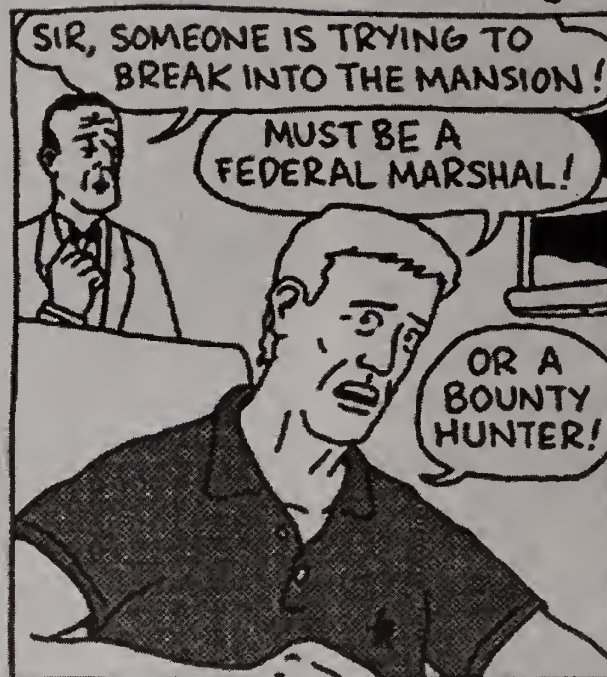
DeZarn's credits include Christine in *Phantom of the Opera*, Magnolia in *Showboat*, Rosa Bud in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, Lily in *Secret Garden*, and Grizabella in *Cats*.

For more information, call Sharon Bernard at 978-665-3547.

THE FUGITIVE II

Wire fraud.
Racketeering.
Trading with the enemy.
Income tax evasion.

The chase begins.



Making it write

Continued from page 5

Recently, author Stephen King wrote a book that he made available via computer. King fans could download the book from a web site and then pay the \$20 fee on an honor system. Yup, I can't wait for the day I can come home from work, grab a cup of coffee and curl up by the fire with...my laptop computer.

The point is that society is burdened by the need for material success and the message that we all have the capability to strike it rich – and that these goals are best accomplished through high-tech and corporate jobs. There is no doubt that these jobs have a lot to offer; we have made them desirable by the path we have chosen for society.

Still, writing is bound to these business-based jobs, and the guy who can write will get the nod over the one who can't. Something you probably won't see on TV.

Although I disagree with many of his points, Dr. Mortimer J. Adler, one of the world's foremost educational reformers, has written at length about what he refers to as his "Great Books" program. This has been experimented with at a number of elementary and secondary schools in the United States, with positive results.

The program consists of students reading one or two major literary works per semester. As they go through the book, students talk out and debate the major issues and

themes that arise. The class is run in a round table, seminar-type setting led by the teacher or professor.

The focus of the class is on conceptual ideas and critical thinking, rather than on trite memorization of facts and/or lecture, although some background information on the books may be given as a foundation.

Every so often, the students will be asked to write short papers to analyze and evaluate the merit of certain issues raised in the book, or to develop a critical viewpoint of their own. The professor then goes over these papers and discusses them individually with students.

I think Adler has hit upon a couple important points. First, he is emphasizing a program that combines writing with the reading of some of our best books. To quote a retired English professor here at FSC, "The only way to learn to write well is to immerse yourself in good writing."

This is why it is so important that reading and writing accompany each other in an English course. You cannot learn to write well if you do not read. However, being able to read does not automatically instill you with the ability to write well, as the girl in the opening example amply demonstrated.

Writing is a skill that must be practiced. Through thorough readings of good literature, you will become a better writer by familiarizing yourself with how to formulate well-structured, grammatically cor-

rect sentences, and by expanding your vocabulary. You will also see how thoughts and ideas are structured throughout a work, and how they result in a piece that is uniform, coherent, and flows smoothly.

Adler also promotes a classroom where communication is at the heart of learning. Oftentimes, we have trouble explaining how we feel to ourselves. More often than not, talking something out with another makes things clearer to us, and gives us understanding of a situation.

The same rule applies here. Seminar learning and debate facilitates the understanding of concepts and issues, an area of education that is, in my opinion, far more important than being able to reel off facts and figures. The more ideas that are generated, the better.

An English course that combines writing with the reading of great literature promotes and nurtures those critical thinking skills that will be necessary to succeed in the working world, no matter what the job may be. This is why I, like Adler, believe that writing is so important – it makes the mind more open, and trains the mind to think critically, in a way that is beneficial and necessary to all of us.

Certainly math and science classes will not be run in this manner. But students coming out of English classes who know how to write well will have an easier time learning anything in these other classes, because their minds are more open to receiving ideas and retaining information (as Adler points out, seminar learning is the best way of cementing things into our minds – more so than rote memorization).

So there is something to be gained by that writing class that you might think is so boring. I would go even further, to say that not only is it there to be gained, but that it *must* be gained. For anyone who is interested in improving their writing, there are a few popular texts that can help.

Turabian's Student's Guide to Writing College Papers covers all areas of putting together a solid, well-structured paper. McDonald and Kessler's When Words Collide addresses grammatical issues in writing, and also emphasizes how to write clear and precise sentences.

Finally, Strunk and White's Elements of Style is a classic text that focuses on proper usage of grammar, rules of composition, and developing a voice that will make your writing sound better on the whole. These books are all available in the Fitchburg State College bookstore as well as the Writing Skills Center, located on the third floor of the Hammond building, which offers help in all areas of writing.

Teachers (even those working without a contract) and Education majors, ask yourselves these things: Is writing important to my students? If so, am I doing what I can to help them improve their writing? Am I putting in the extra effort to meet with students, and to give them the individual help and attention that they need and deserve?

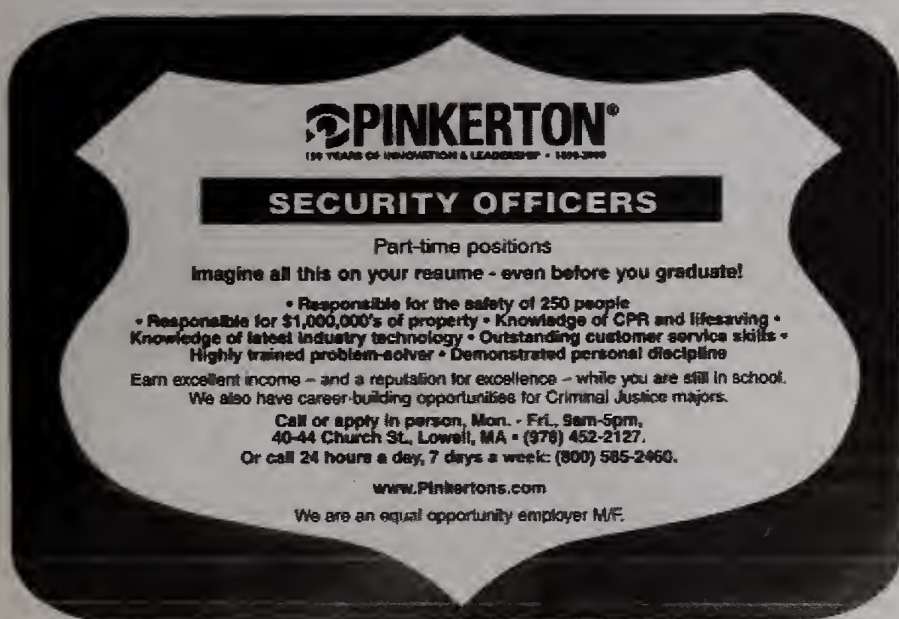
Students: we should look at every paper as an *opportunity* rather than an *assignment*. We should look at it as a way of honing skills that we will need later down the road. Perhaps then we will be less inclined to leave writing work by the wayside, and maybe, for those of us who don't like to write in the first place, it won't bother us so much.

This is a joint effort that must be embraced by everyone. It cannot be done just by students or just by teachers. Students have to want to learn. Teachers have to take a genuine interest in this vital aspect of each student's education.

There has been a lot of ground covered here, but it is all interconnected and entirely relevant. It is easy for us to ascertain that the ability to write well is suffering under the weight of the recent and ongoing explosion in technology, business, and service-based jobs.

It is my belief that, should this trend continue, it will leave the liberal arts as a whole seriously floundering in the wake of a mighty technological tsunami. I am not advocating we all become literary scholars, but I think teachers and students alike need to give more time and attention to fostering a skill that seems to be slowly withering away.

As a student of the liberal arts and the humanities, I realize writing is a skill that spans all disciplines, and I wish to see its importance recognized once again.



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FALCON HOCKEY: SKATING AWAY

By Shaun Moriarty

The Fitchburg State Ice Hockey team has pulled off a hat trick of wins recently, putting them in a tie with U-Mass Dartmouth for fifth place in the ECAC Northeast, a field of 14 teams.

Over the last week, the Falcons won their final two home games of the season and went on to win their first road game of the final road trip of the season. Last Tuesday, February 6, Fitchburg State blew out Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts with a 7-2 pounding at the Wallace Civic Center.

Sophomore defenseman Lee Hamilton was the first to score at 4:09 in the first period. Seniors Mike Dubey and John Whittemore were credited with the assists. At 9:10 in the first, sophomore Chris McNeil scored a goal with help from Jeff Brodeur and Dan Goulet.

Freshman defenseman John Gambale scored what would be the game winner at 18:54 in the first, assisted by Dubey and Brodeur. The goal was a powerplay goal.

Patrick Demsey would get the fourth goal of the game at 3:59 in the second period. Shane Coleman

and Greg Horan were both given assists on the goal.

Then the Liberal Arts college scored their first of two goals in the night. It was Chris Pettengill with a feed from Jerrod Conte at 4:36.

McNeil would get his second, and final, goal of the game at 10:21. Goulet and Brodeur were credited with assists. Brodeur would finish with three assists in the game.

With just several seconds remaining before the Falcons would return to full strength after an interference penalty to Brodeur, Mass College of Liberal Arts scored a power play goal by Nick Cote at 14:20 with help from Tom Schlegel and Scott MacDonald.

Brodeur would make amends for his penalty with a goal at 13:08 in the third period. Horan picked up the assist. Dubey would score the seventh and final goal of the game at 19:11, Whittemore with the assist.

From there the Falcons hosted their final home game of the season on Thursday, February 8, versus Assumption College Greyhounds from Worcester. FSC won this game 4-1 in front of a small crowd at the Civic Center.

Horan scored the first goal of the

game at 14:06 with help from Andrew Phillips and Shane Coleman. The Greyhounds tied the game up at 4:12 in the second period with a John Ilvonen goal. Bob Reddish and Kevin Bisson with the assists. Falcons captain Tony Cinquegrano would score the game-winner during a FSC power play. Coleman and Brodeur with the assists at 6:10 in the second period.

Brodeur would continue to play well, as he scored an unassisted goal at 13:32. Cinquegrano would score once more, with the help of John Gambale, at 15:35 to cap off the home schedule. The Falcons finished 9-4-2 at home.

Finally, on Saturday, February 10, the Falcons embarked on their final road trip of the season, a three game set that would pit them against Plymouth State College, Suffolk University, and Salve Regina. Saturday's game was at Plymouth State in front of 200 fans and Fitchburg won their third consecutive game.

Greg Horan started things up for the Falcons with a goal at 3:20 in the first period. Andrew Phillips and Coleman were given the assists.

Plymouth State's Aaron Fifield capitalized on a power play caused

by a Scott Campbell cross-check and came up with a goal at 12:35. Erik Nadeu with the assist. Whittemore sealed it for the Falcons with a pair of goals early in the second period. His first was at 1:31 with assists from Mark Barravecchio and Dubey. His second goal came at 6:53 with help from Dubey and Mike Savastano.

Plymouth State's Garrett Dionne would score his teams final goal of the game at 13:41, Nadeu with his second assist.

Jeff Brodeur, assists from Cinquegrano and Chris Sawyer, scored at 2:36 in the third period. Barravecchio scored the final goal of the game assisted by Whittemore.

The Falcons are now 10-11-2, 8-6-1 in the ECAC Northeast. They are tied with the U-Mass Dartmouth Corsairs for fifth place.

They have two games left on the schedule; Thursday, February 15 at Suffolk University and Saturday, February 17 at Salve Regina.

Suffolk is 8-9-1 on the year, 6-8-0 in the division. Their game is scheduled for 7:45 p.m.

Salve Regina is 7-13-0 on the year, 4-9-0 in the division. That game is scheduled for 6 p.m.

WAKING FROM HOOP DREAMS

By Shaun Moriarty

A disappointing season has ended for the Fitchburg State mens and womens basketball teams. The men finished at 8-13 while their female counterparts finished at 7-14.

The men lost their final three games of the year, and four of their last five. The girls lost their last four games this season, and six of their final seven and nine of their final eleven games.

Fitchburg State's mens basketball team finished sixth in a field of seven in their division, the Massachusetts State College Athletic Conference. They finished ahead of only Bridgewater State, who finished 3-18.

The girls also finished sixth in a field of seven. They finished ahead of only the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, a pathetic 1-20.

INTRAMURALS

By Shaun Moriarty

With team names like the Doormats, the Billy Oceans, Half-Baked, and Highland Heroes, you know it means one of two things. Either its time for Fitchburg State College Intramurals or Vince McMahon is expanding the XFL.

Intramural basketball games started February 7 at the Rec Center. There are two divisions, A and B, each consisting of seven teams. Scores from last weeks games:

The Billy Oceans over Dawg Pak, 68-42. HNIC over To Be Announced, 53-34. Half Baked over the Doormats, 74-35. Big Dawgs over G-Brones, 80-49.

If you'd like to check out some of the action, there are several games early next

week at the Rec Center. On Monday, February 19, the Billy Oceans square off against the Highland Heroes at 8:00. At 9:00, there are two games scheduled. The matchups are Number One Stunnas vs Rec-cing Crew and Doormats against To Be Announced.

Tuesday, there will be six games including anticipated match ups between Half Baked and the Doormats and Dawg Pak versus Highland Heroes. Games start at 7:00.

Finally, there will be several more games on Wednesday starting at 7:00

On a humorous side note, Doormats captain Ryan Miller will reportedly be wearing a clown suit during the warm ups of one the Doormats games this upcoming week. For more game times and information, contact the Rec Center.

Thursday, February 15

Ice Hockey @ Suffolk University, 7:45

Saturday, February 17

Ice Hockey @ Salve Regina, 6:00